IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

1. (cancelled)

2. (currently amended) The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 7~~1~~, further comprising

eliminating connection patterns, the (outline length/number of black pixels included in a connection pattern) exceeds a prescribed value, of all the connection patterns included in the half-tone dot meshed area.

3. (currently amended) The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 2, wherein a side length of a circumscribed rectangle of a connection pattern is used for the outline length.

4. (currently amended) The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 8~~1~~, further comprising

eliminating projections that are attached to an image except half-tone dots included in the half-tone dot meshed area.

5. (currently amended) The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 4, wherein said projection elimination ~~step~~ eliminates a projection, the size of which is smaller than a connection pattern size eliminated in said connection pattern elimination step.

6. (currently amended) The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 4, wherein said projection elimination ~~step~~ converts a binary image into a grey image, a degradation process is applied to the half-tone dot meshed area and the image after the degradation process is binarized again.

7. (currently amended) A half-tone dot elimination method for eliminating half-tone dots from a half-tone dot meshed image, comprising:

specifying a half-tone dot meshed area based on black pixel connection pattern density of a target process area; and

eliminating a connection pattern, the size of which is smaller than a specific value, based on statistics on black pixel connection pattern sizes included in the half-tone dot meshed area, and~~The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 1,~~

wherein said connection pattern eliminating~~elimination step~~ performs ~~the~~ a process using a threshold value determined based on both an average value and standard deviation of a connection pattern size.

8. (currently amended) A half-tone dot elimination method for eliminating half-tone dots from a half-tone dot meshed image, comprising:

specifying a half-tone dot meshed area based on black pixel connection pattern density of a target process area; and

eliminating a connection pattern, the size of which is smaller than a specific value, based on statistics on black pixel connection pattern sizes included in the half-tone dot meshed area, and~~The half-tone dot elimination method according to claim 1,~~

wherein said connection pattern eliminating~~elimination step~~ performs ~~the~~ a process using a trough of a histogram of connection pattern sizes as a threshold value.

9. (currently amended) A half-tone dot elimination system for eliminating half-tone dots from a half-tone dot meshed image, comprising:

a meshed area specifying unit specifying a half-tone dot meshed area, based on black pixel connection pattern density of a target process area; and

a connection pattern elimination unit eliminating a connection pattern, the size of which is smaller than a specific value, based on statistics on black pixel connection pattern sizes included in the half-tone dot meshed area, and

wherein said connection pattern eliminating performs a process using a threshold value determined based on both an average value and standard deviation of a connection pattern size.

10. (currently amended) A computer readable medium storing a program for enabling a computer to implement a half-tone dot elimination method for eliminating half-tone

dots from a half-tone dot meshed image, the method comprising:

specifying a half-tone dot meshed area, based on black pixel connection pattern density of a target process area; and

eliminating a connection pattern, the size of which is smaller than a specific value, based on statistics on black pixel connection pattern sizes included in the half-tone dot meshed area, and

wherein said connection pattern eliminating performs a process using a threshold value determined based on both an average value and standard deviation of a connection pattern size.